

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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SUBJECT: CIVAIR: TWA SCHEDULE CHANGE

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1. TWA'S PLAN TO REQUEST FOUR NEW WEEKLY FREQUENCIES ON CAIRO-PARIS-NEW YORK IS LIKELY TO ENCOUNTER TWO OBSTACLES, BOTH OF THEM RELATED TO IMPACT ON EGYPTAIR:

(A) PENDING BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS ISSUE CONCERNS EFFECTS ON EGYPTAIR'S POTENTIAL REVENUES OF DAILY TWA OPERATIONS BETWEEN CAIRO-ATHENS AND CAIRO-ROME. AT PRESENT, AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, TWA HAS FIFTH-FREEDOM PASSENGER RIGHTS ON ONLY A PORTION OF THESE FLIGHTS, AND TEMPORARY AUTHORITY ON THE OTHERS, WITH A FINAL DECISION AWAITING BILATERAL TALKS THIS FALL.

(B) ADDING FOUR TWA CAIRO-PARIS-FLIGHTS, ON WHICH EGYPTAIR NOW HAS FOUR NON-STOP FLIGHTS WEEKLY (THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY), WILL PROBABLY BE SEEN HERE AS ADDITIONAL COMPETITION FOR GOE-OWNED COMPANY TO EXTENT BOTH OPERATE ON SAME DAYS. IN EYES OF EGYPTIANS, TWA IS ALREADY MAKING ENOUGH MONEY (AT EXPENSE OF EGYPTAIR IN THEIR SOMEWHAT NARROW BUT

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PERHAPS UNDERSTANDABLE VIEW), AND THERE IS LIKELY

TO BE CONSIDERABLE RESISTANCE, PARTICULARLY WITH OTHER ASPECTS OF TWA OPERATIONS STILL PENDING. WE SHOULD CERTAINLY URGE THAT TWA NOT SCHEDULE FLIGHTS ON SAME DAYS AS EGYPTAIR AS MINIMUM RECOGNITION OF SENSITIVITY.

2. IN BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS LAST FALL, AND ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS SINCE THEN, WE HAVE STRESSED TWO POINTS WITH CONCERNED GOE OFFICIALS: TWA OPS PROVIDE BENEFITS TO EGYPT, BOTH ECONOMIC AND PLITICAL, THAT TRANSCEND MERE NUMBERS OF PASSENGERS INVOLVED; TWA IS NOT ONLY - OR PERHAPS EVEN PRINCIPAL - COMPETITOR FOR EGYPTAIR (ALMOST 20 OTHER CARRIERS FLY CAIRO-ATHENS). BY AND LARGE, OUR EFFORTS WERE UNSUCCESSFUL, AND IT WAS ONLY BY CAREFUL AND EXTENSIVE USE OF POLITICAL INPUTS THAT PRESENT TEMPORARY PERMISSION WAS ORIGINALLY OBTAINED.

3. AS IN CASE OF EARLIER INCREASE TO DAILY SCHEDULE, WHICH LED TO PRESENT PROBLEM, TWA MAY ATTEMPT OBTAIN EGYPTIAN CAA APPROVAL FOR CAIRO-PARIS OPERATIONS AND THEN LATER FACE PASSENGER RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED AS RESULT OF EGYPTAIR OBJECTIONS. USG WAS BROUGHT IN TO ASSIST COMPANY AT THAT POINT, AND SAME TACTIC MAY BE TRIED AGAIN. (WE NOTE- REFTEL - THAT COMPANY HAS TALKED TO GHORBAL BUT SUGGEST EMBASSY NOT DISCUSS SUBJECT WITH "EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS." NEW PROPOSAL HAS BEEN OPEN SECRET IN CAIRO FOR SOME TIME, AND WE DOUBT THAT GHORBAL WILL BE WILLING TO PASS UP CHANCE OF SHOWING HE IS IN THE KNOW.)

4. GIVEN NATURE AND EXTENT OF USG INVOLVEMENT IN TWA ACTIVITIES HERE, IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO EXPLORE EGYPTIAN VIEWS BEFORE RATHER THAN AFTER POSSIBLE PROBLEMS ARE RAISED, BUT WE WILL DEFER TO DEPARTMENT'S JUDGEMENT. IN FINAL ANALYSIS, WE SUSPECT THAT POLITICAL FACTORS WILL AGAIN DOMINATE IN ANY DISCUSSIONS WITH GOE ON THIS SUBJECT, AND IT MAY THEREFORE BE USEFUL TO CONSIDER SIGNIFICANCE TO TWA PROPOSAL IN LIGHT OF OUR OVERALL INTERESTS. EFFORTS TO RESOLVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RESTRICTIONS ISSUE LAST YEAR INVOLVED NUMEROUS HIGH-LEVEL DEMARCHES HERE (FAHMY) AND IN WASHINGTON (GHORBAL). EMBASSY IS OF COURSE FULLY PREPARED TO SUPPORT TWA, BUT NUMBER OF SUBJECTS ON WHICH WE CAN SUCCESSFULLY DUN EGYPTIANS HAS FINITE LIMITS, AND DEPT. WILL HAVE BEST IDEA OF PRIORITIES.
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